



USDA Pathways Programs Frequently Asked Questions



1. What are the USDA Pathways Programs?

The USDA Pathways Programs are for students and recent graduates. There are three major components of the USDA Pathways Programs.

- The USDA Internship Program is for students (replaces the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) and the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP)). It allows students to be exposed to USDA careers through internships while pursuing their degree.
- The USDA Recent Graduates Program is for individuals who have completed a qualifying educational program within the preceding 2 years (with exceptions for certain veterans and individuals graduating after December 27, 2010). The USDA Recent Graduates Program provides developmental opportunities for recent graduates.
- Established in 1977, the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program is a flagship leadership developmental program at the entry level for individuals who are currently completing an advanced degree program (e.g., graduate or professional degree), or who completed the educational requirements for an advanced degree within the preceding 2 years. To learn more, please visit: <http://www.pmf.gov>.

2. What are the eligibility requirements for the USDA Pathways Programs?

Internship Program positions are open to current students enrolled at least half-time in high school/GED, vocational, technical, undergraduate, graduate or professional programs.

Recent Graduates Program positions are open to individuals who completed a qualifying educational program within the preceding 2 years. There are 2 exceptions:

- Certain veterans precluded from applying within the timeframe due to a military service obligation have up to 6 years from completing their education to apply; and
- Applicants who completed their educational program requirements after December 27, 2010 will have a full 2 years of eligibility beginning on the date the final regulations are effective July 10, 2012.

Presidential Management Fellows Program opportunities are announced annually through USAJOBS in late-summer/early-fall. PMF opportunities are currently available only to the

Class of 2012 PMF Finalists. For eligibility information and application instructions, please visit <http://www.pmf.gov>. PMF positions are open to individuals who either:

- Obtained an advanced degree (e.g., graduate or professional degree) within the preceding 2 years; or
- Are attending a qualifying educational institution and expect to complete a qualifying advanced degree by August 31 of the academic year in which the competition is held.

3. What is a qualifying educational institution?

Qualifying educational institutions/programs include: a high school/GED whose curriculum has been approved by a state or local governing body, or a home-school curriculum; and any accredited technical or vocational school, 2- or 4-year college or university, a graduate or professional school, or a post-secondary home-school curriculum.

Applicants may refer to the U.S. Department of Education's Institutional Accreditation System to determine whether their school/program is accredited:
<http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/Search.aspx>.

A post-secondary certificate program must have been completed at a qualifying educational institution equivalent to at least 1 academic year of full-time study that is part of an accredited college-level, technical, trade, vocational, or business school curriculum.

Education completed outside of the United States must be deemed equivalent to that gained in conventional/accredited U.S. education programs to be acceptable for Federal employment. If you received a degree abroad, contact the agency to which you are applying for guidance regarding having your degree reviewed by a U.S.-based credential evaluation service.

4. Where can I find USDA Pathways Programs jobs?

You may search for Internship and Recent Graduates job opportunity announcements at <http://www.usda.usajobs.gov> or at www.studentapplication.usda.gov.

5. How do I apply to USDA Pathways Programs jobs?

USDA agencies allowing submission of applications through USAJOBS may choose to accept uploaded resumes (.gif, .jpg, .jpeg, .png, .rtf, .doc, .docx or .pdf format; 3 megabytes or less) or resumes created using the USAJOBS Resume Builder.

Please follow the application instructions provided within the **"How to Apply"** section of the JOA, because some agencies only accept resumes created using the USAJOBS Resume Builder.

Any required documents (e.g., transcript(s), DD-214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, and, if applicable, SF 15, Application for 10-Point Veterans' Preference:

<http://www.opm.gov/Forms/pdf fill/SF15.pdf>) that are uploaded should be less than or equal to 3 megabytes per file in .gif, .jpg, .jpeg, .png, .rtf, .doc, .docx, or .pdf format.

- **Refer to the “How to Apply” instructions to determine whether you must submit unofficial/web-based transcript(s), or if the agency requires official transcript(s).**

The OF 612, Optional Application for Federal Employment, is obsolete; therefore, if you do not have a resume, you will need to write or build one in order to apply for Pathways opportunities.

- Here are helpful resume tips:
<http://www.usajobs.gov/ResourceCenter/Index/Interactive/ResumeAndApplicationTips#icc>;
- And a Federal resume video tutorial:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XF7j03wGV6A&list=PL6BF697487F79A52F&index=2&feature=plpp_video.

6. What types of training are available to USDA Pathways Programs participants?

Interns, Recent Graduates, and Presidential Management Fellows (PMFs) receive on-the-job training. USDA utilizes AgLearn, a state of the art distance learning management system. Interns and Recent Graduates receive at least 40 hours of formal, interactive training per year. This includes workshops, seminars, and webinars on topics such as diversity, project management, leadership development and much more. PMFs receive at least 80 hours of formal, interactive training per year. PMFs complete at least 1 rotational or developmental assignment for 4 to 6-months, or participate in an agency-wide or Presidential initiative. Interns, PMFs, and Recent Graduates are assigned a mentor. Some USDA agencies also provide shadowing and detail experiences.

7. How do I check the status of my application?

If you submitted your application(s) online using USAJOBS, you may check the status of your application(s) from the <http://www.usajobs.gov> “My Account” menu. Otherwise, you may call or email the agency point of contact listed within the job opportunity announcement to check the status of your application.

8. Does veteran’s preference apply to USDA Pathways Programs jobs?

Yes, veterans’ preference applies to all Pathways Programs job opportunities. If you qualify for veterans’ preference, be sure to upload your DD-214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty and, if applicable, SF 15, Application for 10-Point Veterans’ Preference: <http://www.opm.gov/Forms/pdf fill/SF15.pdf>; or attach your DD-214 and, if applicable, SF 15 to each internship opportunity. Uploaded DD-214 and, if applicable, SF 15 should be less than or equal to 3 megabytes in .gif, .jpg, .jpeg, .png, .rtf, .doc, .docx or .pdf format.

9. Do USDA Pathways jobs lead to permanent employment?

Employment in a USDA Pathways Program may lead to conversion to a permanent, competitive service position, contingent upon meeting program requirements and the needs of the employing USDA agency.

10. What benefits are available to USDA Pathways participants?

Recent Graduates and Presidential Management Fellows are generally eligible for retirement benefits; flexible spending accounts; health, life, dental, vision, and long-term care insurance. Interns hired on a short-term basis (e.g., summer hire) may not be eligible for the aforementioned benefits. Pathways participants that will work at least 90-days accrue vacation and sick-leave once they begin their Program.

11. Are USDA Pathways Programs jobs paid positions?

Yes, the salary is listed within the job opportunity announcement. All compensation decisions are made by the hiring agency.